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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR JORDANIAN KING ABDULLAH'S VISIT

REF: A. AMMAN 445
[1](#)B. AMMAN 551
[1](#)C. AMMAN 251
[1](#)D. AMMAN 611

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) King Abdullah left Amman February 27 for London. He will arrive in Boston February 28, and in Washington March 4. He is scheduled to address a joint session of Congress March [1](#)7. He met with Secretary Rice February 20.

[1](#)2. (C) The Israeli-Palestinian conflict will again be at the top of the King's agenda in Washington. The GOJ was surprised by the Mecca Agreement, and is now worried that it will complicate the efforts of the U.S. and Arab moderates to contain Hamas (and standing behind it, Syria and Iran.) By the time of Haniyeh's resignation, Jordan was the only key Arab player that still refused to receive him.

[1](#)3. (C) Jordanian leaders' apprehension is mounting over the future of Iraq. The King believes he would be seriously weakened by a bad outcome in Iraq, but many other Jordanians, taking their cues from Arab and international media, take failure of the U.S. effort there as a foregone conclusion. The revival of international focus on displaced Iraqis in Jordan, and speculation that events in Iraq might lead to international pressure on Jordan to accept more, has all Jordanians worried (ref A). The Palestinian refugee flows of the late 1940s and of 1967, and the civil war that followed, are never far from Jordanian minds.

[1](#)4. (C) Iran's role in Iraq, and ordinary Jordanians' sympathy for fellow Sunni Arabs in Iraq, has brought more around to the King's long-held view of Tehran as the principal threat to the region. However, the Jordanian "street" simultaneously admires Iran's support of groups like Hizballah and Hamas and their willingness to take on Israel. Many also welcome Tehran's defiance of the U.S. - and by extension Israel - over the nuclear issue. King Abdullah was concerned that the Saudis did not consult with him on their contacts with Tehran; he flew to Riyadh February 26 and met with Saudi Arabia's King. Saudi aid is very important to Jordan; it exceeded \$400 million in 2006 with more likely in [1](#)2007. Of even more importance to the King is the close and strategic relationship he has forged with Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.

[1](#)5. (C) The controversy over construction work adjacent to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif has resonated on streets throughout the Muslim world, and embarrassed King Abdullah, who in theory retains a treaty role in the administration of Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. Jordan's technical administrators are in Jerusalem now, seeking updates on the condition of structures there and attempting to repair their dysfunctional relationship with the Israeli administrators. In public, the GOJ has called for calm over

the dispute.

Request for additional assistance

¶16. (C) GOJ officials have requested several hundred million dollars in supplemental FY 07 military and economic aid (ref B.) Military aid is the King's priority, because he views Syria as an increasingly serious threat. Prince Feisal recently marketed the supplemental request directly on the Hill, and reviewed it with the visiting director of DOD's Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

Internal Developments

¶17. (C) All of Abdullah's leading advisors are urging him to dismiss Prime Minister Bakheet. Although Bakheet is himself a product of the military and the Royal Court, many in the Palace and the security service criticize Bakheet's mixed record in pushing through Parliament bills the King has identified as priorities, and lackluster execution of the public works campaign meant to boost support for moderates in the elections expected later this year. Some also know he is soft on Islamists and a lukewarm supporter of the King's foreign policy. The King may decide to change governments when Parliament recesses late in the spring or in early summer.

¶18. (C) Jordan will hold municipal elections in mid-2007, and elect a new parliament in the Fall (ref C). Establishment politicians and Islamists are both gearing up for what are likely to be tough contests. The King has privately decided to hold the parliamentary polls in October under the same electoral law that in 2003 produced the current parliament; democracy activists had hoped for a reformed electoral law, while the security establishment had been urging the King to postpone the elections out of fear Islamists would poll strongly on popular unhappiness with economic liberalization and Jordanian foreign policy (ref D). He has chosen a middle course.

¶19. (C) The Millennium Challenge Corporation is negotiating a Compact Agreement with the GOJ, and is about to provide assistance in municipal governance under last year's Threshold Agreement, once the upper house of parliament completes passage a new municipal government law, as expected. MCC is particularly focused on further opening up Jordan's political system and media.

Nuclear Energy

¶10. (C) Abdullah is likely to raise while in Washington his interest in developing a peaceful, transparent nuclear energy program. His consultants believe a reactor could be financed by exploiting hitherto untapped uranium deposits that are associated with Jordan's phosphate resources. The King sees his proposal as a potential model to contrast against Iran's nuclear program. The Jordanians want to consult us first, but will also meet with IAEA Director General El Baradei immediately after the DC visit.

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